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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an elaboration of the relationship between politics and music video, to discern if the political climate impacts upon the cultural landscape. The paper analyzes in detail Don Henley's "The End of Innocence" because Henley is a prominent political activist and views music as a vehicle for change. The paper also makes use of Henley's own comments about his personal philosophy in the analysis. The paper concludes that the video relies on a strategy of ambiguity, which blurs the political content of the video. The paper maintains that music videos are exemplary texts for critical instruction, since their brevity and richness of detail provide students with the opportunity to experience popular culture, while simultaneously reifying critical categories of analysis. The paper includes 55 endnotes and one appendix containing song lyrics. (Author/SG)

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'SHAKEN NOT STIRRING':
A CASE STUDY OF THE POLITICAL POTENTIAL OF ROCK MUSIC VIDEO

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Abstract

This paper presents an elaboration of the relationship between politics and music video, in an endeavor to discern if the political climate impacts upon the cultural landscape. As such, Don Henley's "The End of the Innocence" is examined because Henley is a prominent political activist and views music as a vehicle for change. The paper concludes that the video relies on a strategy of ambiguity, which blurs the political content.

Music videos are exemplary texts for critical instruction. Their brevity and richness of detail provide students with the opportunity to experience popular culture, while simultaneously reifying critical categories of analysis.

"Believe me, these times are just as urgent, just as dangerous, as the Sixties and there's just as much to rally behind. Especially with Reagan telling us how America is back on track. America is not back on track. People are still homeless, people are still out of work, the farmers are going out of business, and we're experiencing the biggest deficit in history. A large part of the nation has gone back to a narrow, fundamentalist way of thinking. We think God is an American." --Don Henley[1]

Music and politics have a historical relationship. From political campaigns and union organizing, to the abolition and suffrage movements, song has long played a part in expressing political positions and encouraging audiences to make judgments.[2] Popular songs of the sixties, for example, often exuded a sense of the political as frustrated youth sang of societal injustice. The seventies were musically a-political. In contrast, the eighties have been witness to an upsurge of rock activism, most notably in the form of the charity rock mega-events. What distinguishes political pop in the eighties from its predecessors is not only a focus on single-issues and humanitarian causes, but the willingness of rock activists to intervene in established political processes.[3] In that sense, the relationship between politics and popular music has been institutionalized only during the last decade.

Even though musicians have been increasingly outspoken advocates for and against American policies and politicians, rock activism has reached new heights during the eighties: Candidates for political office increasingly called upon their music industry counterparts as a way to identify with the mass population. Bruce Springsteen, for example, a rock activist who maintains an a-political focus on local events and issues, was courted by both presidential contenders in 1984. Similarly, one commentator speculated that the only thing the two major presidential candidates agreed on in 1988 was "[t]he right to use copyrighted songs at rallies and fundraisers without the permission of the copyright holder";[4] she is not referring to mere background music, but the strategic selection of popular music to both define a campaign, as well as send a message to the opponent and his supporters. The Bush campaign, for instance, was brought to court over the unfair use of Bobby McFerrin's "Don't Worry, Be Happy." Dionne Warwick's "Message to Michael" was another Bush favorite. Likewise, Michael Dukakis played Credence Clearwater Revival's "Fortunate Son" to highlight the contrast between Bush's wealthy and pampered lifestyle and Dukakis's modest one. Dukakis used Neil Diamond's "America," even at the Democratic Convention. There, Jesse Jackson showed his "campaign film"--a hard-hitting music

video by Jackson Browne. Frank Zappa, musician and vociferous opponent of music censorship, launched his own campaign in 1988--against Republican hopeful Pat Robertson.

In addition to utilizing popular music, political office-seekers eagerly court celebrity financial support and personal endorsements. During the most recent presidential contest, campaign representatives of Michael Dukakis, Al Gore, and Jesse Jackson all reported that "music-industry support is crucial."[5] In fact, in 1988 the Federal Election Commission fined ASCAP for campaign funding violations when it was discovered that from 1984-1987 ASCAP contributed $165,000 out of its general fund to political campaigns.[6] As a result of the FEC ruling, ASCAP registered as a Political Action Committee and promised to disclose reports of politically-oriented expenditures (as is customary of PACs).[7] But ASCAP is not the only branch of the music industry to be involved in campaign financing; both Opryland and the American Federation of Music have active PACs. The relationship between politicians and the entertainment industry, however, extends far beyond the music industry to encompass Hollywood.[8]

The resurgence of popular music in the political arena is accompanied by technological changes in the business of making music. Most notable is the widespread popularity of

music video as a promotional tool for the recording industry. The impact of music video is significant. It is commonly held, in fact, that music video saved the ailing recording industry. [9]

This paper investigates the political potential of music video, in an attempt to ascertain what effect if any the political culture has on the creation of popular rock music. As such, Don Henley's "The End of the Innocence" is examined to explore the extent to which contemporary rock activism is expressed textually in music videos. Given that Henley himself has been and continues to be involved in a variety of political and social causes, and given that he endeavors to bridge the gap between politics and music through his work, "The End of the Innocence" serves as a sensible case study to examine the extent to which the medium is willing or able to carry political messages. Ultimately, I argue below, Henley's critique is blurred because of a reliance on aesthetic strategies designed to make his work palatable to producers and inoffensive to consumers; by fusing an aesthetic strategy with a marketing strategy, the video depiction becomes creatively ambiguous.

This paper is divided into three sections. First, the phenomenon of music video is situated historically and its aesthetics are described. Second, Henley's personal

history, as it constitutes the intertextual knowledge of dedicated fans, is elaborated. Third, the video "The End of the Innocence" is described and examined.

Music Video

Music video is a hybrid form, but one that is not without tradition. Many critics view that tradition as the music industry, thereby disregarding the televisual marriage of sound and image. All elements, however, must be interrogated if an adequate reading of the music video experience is sought. Unfortunately, most studies of music video to date undermine their own critical power, by framing their analyses around a solitary focus.

Ann Johnston Wadsworth and Linda Lee Kaid deal explicitly with political themes.[10] The authors identify four categories of political symbols employed in music videos--Oppression, War, Peace, and American Values. Although their analysis disregards the aural elements of the song, the fact that political themes can be identified visually suggests that it is productive to examine music videos for political content.

Paul Attallah[11] discusses music video from the point of view of television, to compensate for what he sees as other

critics' over-reliance on the musical tradition. "Music videos," Attallah reports, "have been accused of subjugating music to image" [12]; but this is an unfair accusation. After all, the marriage of sight and sound has historically been one of the hallmarks of television. Therefore, music video should be interrogated "from the standpoint of the audience it seeks to construct," which

> allows us to precisely interrogate such phenomena as the construction of a performer's or a band's public image, and consequently the ways in which they draw upon iconic and musical traditions in order to situate themselves.[13]

Adolescent viewers rely on the visual dimension to help them make sense of the music and lyrics of the song. A study by Sun and Lull[14] indicates that rather than complaining their imaginations are robbed, adolescent-

> respondents see the images as "visual aids" or as "pictoral translations" of the <u>meaning</u> of the various songs they represent. . . giv[ing] "more meaning" to a song than they themselves would conjure up. . . Others responded that the visual interpretations presented in the videos helped them get "<u>the</u> understanding" of the songs,

> implying that they believed that there is but one authentic meaning.[15]

Like Sun and Lull, Steve Jones[16] disregards the claim that music video devalues music by valorizing the image, although he regards music video as primarily a visual phenomenon: Television itself perpetuates the primacy of the visual.

> Vision, visual perception, and the electronic media's knowledge and use of techniques stressing the visual, are being exploited by a new narrative form in our culture, found most often in music videos.[17]

The new form of narrative, called digital narrative by Jones, constitutes a discontinuous representation of bits of information, somewhat analogous to a computer. Digital narrative is most often featured in concept videos, in which the focus is not on performance per se. The logic of such constructions is non-linear, emphasized primarily by the lack of direct correlation between the video narrative and the lyrics of the song. Thus, music videos constitute cohesive units made incoherent through their reliance on the codes and conventions transmitable via television.

Jones's perspective exemplifies a trend in popular culture studies, to situate music video within postmodernism.[18] The logic of postmodernism, states

Grossberg, perpetuates specific aesthetic-textual forms that are used to code it: "the use of fragmentation, of images without referents, of subjects without substance, of history without reality, and narratives without coherence."[19] Taken as a whole, such strategies suggest that music video is incapable, by its very postmodern nature, of carrying political content.

While postmodernism is an apt descriptor for many music videos, it is not a universally applicable concept in an era of heightened political commitment (on the part of music celebrities). The ubiquity of postmodern techniques denies the possibility that stars may water-down their political commitments for profit reasons. While it suggests the centrality of culture in the construction of rhetorical texts (music videos), it runs the risk of relegating the creation of messages to a kind of disturbing determinism. After all, cultural influences and contingencies intersect in and are embodied by the artist. Artists make creative decisions as a result of their personal philosophies and what they perceive to be an acceptable response to the cultural milieu given that there is some need to safeguard their careers. Don Henley's testimony, examined below, is illustrative.

Like Grossberg, Robert Hodge[20] expresses little hope in the political potential of any cultural forms, most notably music video. Song consists of potentially competing semiotic systems--words and music; coupled with the videoclip, such a fusion of forms undercuts political effectivity by preventing the direct connection between art and life. In short, notes Hodge, the form constrains the message. However, competing semiotic systems can bring a certain richness and complexity to music videos, opening up vast interpretive avenues. In many cases the semiotic systems interact to create a totalizing emotional (or other) experience. It does not seem as significant to assert that semiotic systems compete, as it does to show which semiotic system is victorious and why. For victory implies dominance, and the way in which a given videoclip is received will depend on what elements reign supreme. The authors reviewed above maintain the traditional position that visuals dominate. I take issue with that perspective below.[21]

Don Henley

Born in East Texas in 1947, Henley spent his early years working on the family farm. After a brief term at two

Texas universities, he left Texas to pursue a musical career. As a member of the Eagles from 1971-1980, Henley was often characterized as abrasive and cynical. After the Eagles disbanded, Henley embarked upon a solo career. Recently, he has expanded his interests to include saving Walden Pond, the haven of Thoreau, from the hands of developers. Henley also has been a campaigner for Democratic hopefuls, as an individual and as a member of the Eagles. In fact, the Eagles finally abandoned giving benefit concerts, because they felt their racy reputation might damage the credibility of the candidates.

While "The End of the Innocence" has been critically acclaimed, it has been overwhelmingly received as anti-Reagan.[22] It is important to note that Henley's most cutting attack on the Reagan administration, "Little Tin God," was not released as a single (and therefore, not released on music video). Nevertheless, songs such as "Little Tin God" contribute to labelling Henley as a cynical, hard-edged musician. In response to his critics Henley comments,

> [t]his misanthrope business has always been a complete mystery to me. [I am] critical, but for fair reasons: [I care] about [my] fellow man;. . .ecology;. . .the Indians;. . .nuclear energy. And so [I point out what

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is] wrong. I don't consider that to be misanthropic--I consider it to be criticism.[23]

Henley is cognizant that his celebrity status is the source of his credibility. When queried about the political effectivity of pop artists, Henley responds,

> [a]ll I can do is my part, getting involved in what I can without sacrificing my career. My friend Jackson Browne has the same problem. He's committed himself to so many causes. The only reason he and I can have some influence is because we've had hit records, and if we let the record making go, then we can't do as much.[24]

Having personally outgrown the excesses and hedonism of his Eagles days, Henley endeavors to locate a purpose for his music;

> [m]aybe what I'm trying to do is find a purpose for being in the music business. I'm trying to make people think a little bit and be aware of things. Maybe rock & roll is not the vehicle for this sort of thing--but I don't see why it can't be.[25]

Promoting political awareness via music is not new to Henley, although his political perspective has not always been picked up. The Eagles was a socially responsible band, at least according to Henley, always "d[oing its] part to give something back to the community and charities of

various kinds"(p. 93).[26] The Eagles repertoire was replete with political commentary, even if nobody noticed. "Hotel California" was not really about the Southern California lifestyle as the critics claimed; rather it was an indictment of America's self-indulgent culture. Similarly, notes Henley, "'On the Border' was a thinly--perhaps I should say thickly--disguised political piece about Nixon and all of the trouble he was in."[27] In fact, reading the recent Henley interviews, one is struck by the extent to which Henley describes his music as reflecting the contemporary political climate, particularly his dissatisfaction with Republicans: The Seventies contributed only Nixon and Reagan, sending the United States "right back in the hands it was in before."[28]

There are limits, however, to how hard a pop artist should push his/her agenda;

> you can't climb on a soaphox on your record and rail all of the time, because that turns people off. When caring becomes a fad, when activism becomes fashionable, look out--because people are going to turn away from it.[29]

To combat oversell, then, Henley asserts that

> keeping in mind that a good love song never hurts on an

album, I try to get as much information as I can gracefully get into a song without making it a pedantic treatise.[30]

Thus, Henley confirms that his music is created as a vehicle for change, but that his work is subsumed by strategies of soft sell and subtlety. Such subtlety may lead to ambiguity, but ambiguity is not necessarily a-political. Rather it reflects Henley's personal philosophy, and ultimately reveals a faith in humankind. For when Henley states, "It was either Thomas Jefferson or Benjamin Franklin who said, 'People don't need to be taught so much as reminded,'" he is trusting that if we're reminded of Reagan's shortcomings, we will necessarily withdraw our support.[31]

Below is an analysis of Don Henley's "The End of the Innocence." Henley's political activism makes him a good candidate to investigate the interconnection of politics and music. Because his active political participation has attracted media attention, viewers have access to an intertextual storehouse of information, to help them interpret the meaning of Henley's works.[32] Such "semiotic surplus value" constitutes the meanings that are purchased along with the commodity. And as Hodge points out, the viewer plays a part in the construction of meaning.[33]

"The End of the Innocence"

Henley, the narrator,[34] returns to his home town only to find it desolate and economically depressed. As he wanders through town, memories of the carefree childhood he left behind are brought to mind. From playing tag on the fourth of July to the loss of his virginity, Henley fondly recounts the innocence he left behind. Such images of love and play are juxtaposed with depictions of authority figures. Although most of the figures are unidentifiable, the busts of Ronald Reagan and Oliver North are featured as Henley meanders down memory lane. Ultimately, Henley cannot bear the changes in his hometown. He envisions a return to the past--abundant wheat fields waving in the wind, mammy sitting in the field. The power of the past is great compared with the pathetic state of the present. The video ends with Henley clad in black, standing like a silent sentinel by the roadside, attempting to hitchhike out of town. More victim than savior, Henley is the epitomizes the anti-hero.

Analysis

A certain lust for the past prevails throughout the video, in image, lyric, and sound. Henley's sojourn

encompasses both past and present as he ruminates about the past he remembers and the unpleasant present he is forced to recognize. To understand and interpret Henley's journey we must come to terms with Henley's use of nostalgia and authority. Although the lyrics, music and visuals are complementary, I divorce them temporarily to highlight their hierarchical presentation in the video. First, I discuss the way the video's rhythm perpetuates the nostalgic theme. Second, I reveal the role of the lyrics and visuals in reinforcing the rhythmic nostalgia. Third, the paradoxical presentation of authority is demonstrated, as it relates to music, lyrics, and image.[35]

Nostalgia: Rhythm

Rhythm, one of the defining characteristics in the development of the genre of rock music,[36] should be distinguished from tempo (how fast the song is played). As "the most basic structural element of music [, rhythm]. . . can exist and be pleasing by itself, but other structural elements cannot exist in any meaningful sense without it. Rhythm is change."[37] Good rock music is characterized by "the organic tension created by a variety of rhythms, demanding resolution."[38]

"While rhythm is a conspicuous feature in music [and poetry], it is also a dominant element in nearly all phases of our daily life";[39]

> Rhythms find resonance in the whole organism. It is not a matter of the ear or finger only; it is a matter of the two fundamental powers of life, namely, knowing and acting. And, therefore, indirectly it affects the circulation, respiration, and all of the secretions of the body in such a way as to arouse agreeable feeling. Herein we find the groundwork of emotion; for rhythm, whether in perception or action, is emotional when highly developed, and results in response of the whole organism to its pulsations.[40]

Thus, considerations of the rhythmic quality of music video cannot be ignored without great costs. Music psychologist Carl Seashore sums up the two central functions of rhythm:

> It stimulates and lulls, as contradictory as this may seem. Pronounced rhythm brings on a feeling of elation which not infrequently results in a mild form of ecstasy or absent-mindedness, a loss of consciousness of the environment. It excites, and it makes us insensible to the excitation, giving the feeling of being lulled.[41]

He goes on to provide the example of the military march as perpetuating obliviousness and passivity. Granam elaborates:

> Martial music is psychologically akin to popular dance music, including most rock, although it serves a different sociological function. The relentless drumbeat of the military band helps to mobilize soldiers for mindless war games, while the oppressive beat that characterizes so much commercial rock captures and concentrates young people's energies on less harmful, but equally mindless, activity.[42]

The centrality of rhythm, and its capacity to command the entire organism is evident in Henley's musical arrangement. Tempo enhances the nostalgic appeal of the video by creating a rhythmic reminiscence, a momentary wallowing, too slow and dreamlike to incite the viewer to action. Lengthy chord progressions draw out the moment, and by holding it constant subsume the viewer in reverie. A metronomic ticking, in sync with the human heartbeat, drones steadily throughout the song, transporting the viewer into a trance-like state. The piano is syncopated with the metronome, creating a rhythmic tension as the downbeat consistently falls in the pauses between the metronomic notes; a delicate tin-sounding ticking can be heard softly,

proceeding at twice the pace of the dominant heartbeat. As the song continues, the tension is enhanced as new percussion is added. For instance, during the first refrain an interesting cymbal-like sound punctuates the end of each sentence. It remains constant during the entire second verse, and appropriately so--here Henley laments the unchecked influence of the political-military establishment. The music reaches its climax just before the last melodic cycle, with the introduction of an instrumental segment (D); this saxophone solo is foreshadowed throughout the song, rising to elegiac proportions during the climax. The musical climax corresponds with the narrative climax; Henley is jolted out of the past to face the future. The effect of the layered arrangement is to attract and maintain attention, to stimulate and to lull.

The various instrumental parts are furthered layered with the song lyrics. Like the piano, the phrases articulated by Henley fall between the beats of the dominant metronomic beat. The metered phrases most often take the form of iambic tetrameter,[43] frequently feature end rhymes. Compare, for instance, the three verses (B):

1 abcbdddb

2 abcbddda

3 aabbccde

Verses one and two are nearly identical. The rhyming couplets of verse three depart from the earlier pattern. Following the narrative and musical climax, the new pattern evident in the third verse corresponds nicely with the passing from the past to the present. In addition to meter and end rhyme, alliteration ("long last look"), assonance ("But 'happily ever after' fails"), and consonance ("For this tired old man that we elected king") are prevalent. In the language of poetry, Henley's lyrics are best characterized as an elegy--a lament of loss. Indeed, Henley laments the loss of innocence and individuality owing to the unchecked influence of government.

It is not surprising that the music is dominant, because the music was written first. Bruce Hornsby wrote the basic musical track, to which Henley added the lyrics. Henley actually wrote the song on the drive home from Hornsby's, and the images that passed by his window were incorporated into the song.[44]

What is interesting about the refrain (C), musically speaking, is the way the arrangement is constructed to call attention to the last line "This is the end of the innocence." Here the piano provides a dialogic counterpoint to Henley's voice, unlike the end of sentence embellishments evident earlier (A). Put another way, instead of coming in

under the lyrics in a fragmented and unobtrusive way, the piano becomes fuller and more significant, almost responding to Henley in complete impassioned phrases.

The vocal quality of Henley's phraseology is significant in and of itself. He seems to be straining to articulate his disappointment, especially during the refrain (C). Yet, that strained quality is favored by Henley: "We [Henley and his collaborator] always try to put songs in a key that puts me at the top of my range, so I have to strain a bit to get it. I don't like relaxed vocals."[45] Given that Henley wants his songs to do something--serve as a vehicle for change--his testimony lends credence to Lomax's observation that there is a relationship between vocal control and social control;

> a strangulated or tense vocal quality signifies a repressive social order, and a relaxed vocal quality the reverse.[46]

Indeed, there is enough evidence to suggest that Henley is not pleased with the current state of the nation, nor with its present or past Republican leadership. Henley's voice mellows when he maintains "But this is the end/This is the end of the Innocence," and the piano is temporarily suspended to let his muffled musings be heard.

Instead of disregarding the rhythmic structure advanced by the musical arrangement, the lyrics and visuals complement the music, yet remain subordinate to it. Editing techniques mimic the sense of undulation evident in the music. The mise en scene (movement within shots) is slow and calculated, corresponding to the rhythm of the music, giving the video a dream-like quality. Although certain phrases predominate, the mood of the video is advanced not so much by Henley's near-rhyming couplets, but by the music. The music constitutes a broader cycle (ABC), that coordinates the lyrics and visuals into a cohesive whole.

Nostalgia: Lyric and Image

The video opens with Henley reflecting upon the past, both literally and figuratively: We see Henley's reflection in the store window and understand that the flashbacks are a product of Henley's (at least his character) memory. The historical nature of Henley's musings is also reinforced by the low contrast black and white footage, giving the video the cast of a bygone era. As he peers into a dusty, abandoned music shop window we are reminded of the establishing shots of an abandoned house and gas station. The musical objects of Henley's gaze are employed later in

the video, in a flashback to a fourth of July celebration. The near-ghost town that receives Henley reinforces the economic depression that has befallen his birthplace.

His lyrics reinforce his nostalgia with the invitation to "Remember when the days were long/And rolled beneath the deep blue sky." His recollection employs a mixed metaphor (the idea of days rolling) that sets up an allusion to Reagan. While it is uncommon to conceive of days as rolling, it is not out of the ordinary to think of film as rolling, as in when a film is being screened for an audience. Henley reminds the viewer of Reagan's acting career via his choice of metaphor. The following lyrics can be linked to Reagan just as easily as to the childhood scene depicted on screen. "But 'happily ever after' fails/And we've been poisoned by these fairy tales" also suggests Reagan's fondness for storytelling, and the negative impact (on the nation) of his success.

The action proceeds from childhood play to a first encounter with sex. The sexual encounter culminates with a shot of a rain dripping into a bucket, implying the consummation of the relationship. Additionally, the bucket imagery has a more pragmatic interpretation: Just as we do not notice the water collecting until it overflows, we do not notice government corruption until it is exposed;

however that does not mean that corruption does not exist. Corruption is subtle and cumulative, and shows it's true colors only gradually if at all.

Henley's nostalgic escapism reaches its peak during the refrain as he reveals, "I know a place where we can go." Initially that secret spot, "That's still untouched by men," serves as a sexual haven for new lovers. Henley employs double entendre here, suggesting both the young female virgin and the unspoiled wilderness. The next time he uses the phrase ("I know a place where we can go") as a follow-up to the military. Here Henley acknowledges the necessity of cleansing ("To wash away this sin"), of overcoming bad military decisions. We see a Black mammy, sitting happily in a field. The theme of getting back to nature is supported in each case. Having spent his youth pouring over the writings of Emerson and Thoreau, Henley's affinity for the appreciation and protection of the natural world are apparent. In fact, in interview upon interview he acknowledges the environment was the impetus for his interest in politics, noting that "when we find something good, we destroy it by our presence--by the very fact that man is the only animal on earth capable of destroying his environment.[47]

In the video Henley strains to see the site of his first sexual encounter through a fence. Likewise, as the video is drawing to a close, Henley stands in a wheat field surrounded by electrical towers. Both observations combine to highlight the diminishment of our natural resources, in particular the loss of farmland. The state of the environment is also featured in the selection of a movie theatre to convey the lines "O' beautiful, for spacious skies/And now those skies are threatening;" the movie screen serves as a backdrop, upon which an artificial sun can be seen. Ozone depletion and a high concentration of pollutants in the atmosphere make living indoors a very real possibility, a concern ridiculed by high ranking government officials.[48] The fact that fairy tales for Henley function as "poison" suggests his environmental activism. The movie theatre has a dual function, however, by also serving to remind the viewer of Reagan's past career as an actor (as his opening mixed metaphor suggests). The idea that Reagan is merely playing another role is enhanced by the inclusion of the Reagan poster that follows (discussed in more detail below).

The future invoked by Henley is really the past, making Henley's vision a rather conservative one, not unlike the images conjured up by the great storyteller, Ronald Reagan.

Henley's conservative vision lends him an air of credibility: Just because he is critical of the Reagan Administration does not mean he is anti-American. Yet, his recollections reflect the values promulgated by Reagan. Henley offers his viewers a past/future focusing on family and faith in government (patriotism). Children are pictured within sight of their parents, and at least one depiction centers on a fourth of July celebration.

At this point Henley intervenes into the past, and the ticker tape and confetti, signifying the nation's birthday, become the symbolic snow that jolts Henley back to the present: He is framed on the right side of the screen to suggest he is looking forward, and that his momentary wallowing has ceased.

Henley's personal philosophy provides the impetus for him to invoke the past. In his words,

> [p]eople long for the past, because it is so much safer than the future. The future is so uncertain, but the past is very concrete. We're living in very uncertain times.[49]

Nevertheless, the past, in the form of traditional American values, constitutes the central core of Reagan's and Henley's respective rhetoric.

Throughout the video Henley never directly addresses the camera, even though there are frequent close-ups. During flashbacks Henley is framed on the left side of the screen to symbolize, via filmic convention, his orientation to the past. And, as "The End of the Innocence" draws to a close, Henley dons dark glasses, as if to prevent himself from seeing the world as it is; here he occupies the right side of the screen, to imply he is facing the future. Henley would rather just remember, and hitchhike out of town with his memories intact and his ability to effect change unexplored. That the individual is viewed as a victim of circumstances beyond his/her control is made clear with Henley's query "Who knows how long this will last." There is some ambiguity as to whether "this" refers to Henley's flashback or the reign of a Republican administration. As a automobile approaches Henley, the camera angle changes from a canted angle to a straight shot. Henley continues walking upscreen, as the screen fades to white, not the more typical black. The white screen, together with the upward camera shot reflect Henley's basic optimism. "I <u>do</u> have hope," Henley told an interviewer, "I mean, inside every cynic there's an idealist trying to get out. At least in my case there is."[50]

Authority

Throughout "The End of the Innocence" references to authority are, with two exceptions, general and diffuse--indicating lawyers, politicians, and military servicemen. With the words "The lawyers dwell on small details/Since daddy had to fly" Henley features shots of lawyer in winged tipped shoes. The camera lingers on the shoes, and the implication is clear: Unlike the residents of Henley's dusty little rural town, only the lawyer manages to keep his shoes clean. A sign of breeding, maybe, but more likely a lament about the dangers that accrue when leadership lacks accountability. The issue of government accountability is high on Henley's list of gripes. "[W]ith duty to country, Henley told an interviewer, "comes accountability. I fully believe that ethics should be taught in school."[51]

In verse two, a torn poster of Reagan is featured as Henley warns "O' beautiful, for spacious skies/And now those skies are threatening/They're beating plowshares into swords/For this tired old man that we elected king." The poster is not defaced or marred by graffiti, rather it is weather-beaten, suggesting that the nation's faith in Reagan is misplaced. Going on to insist "Armchair warriors often fail," we see the bust on an anonymous politician presumably

addressing the public from Washington D.C. (the characteristic Greek columns betray the location, as the festive red, white and blue banners betray the campaigning occasion). Likewise, when Henley sings "The lawyers clean up all details" the camera takes us into a middle class kitchen where the bust of Oliver North is displayed prominently on the television screen. He continues with a modification of the first verse: "Since Daddy had to lie." The reference to lying is no doubt linked to North. But whereas the lawyer depicted earlier was dwelling on details, to the extent that he could make lots of money and afford expensive shoes, the current lawyer is cleaning up details--by literally washing his hands of them. Indeed, the shot of North is followed up with that of a man (the lyrics tell us he is a lawyer) scrubbing his hands in the sink, without the deliberate discomfort of a Lady MacBeth. In both references to the legal profession, Henley indicts the superficiality of a society (ours) based on the construction of appearances, though he does not interrogate the causes of that disturbing focus.

A solitary young recruit, having his head shaved before he leaves for bootcamp constitutes the next brush with authority. The recruit personalizes the military, and emphasizes the youthfulness and innocence of our troops. In

an ironic allusion to the young lovers of verse one, Henley commands "Let your hair spill all around me." The recruit's freshly cut hair falls on his clean shoes, but he quickly knocks it off. Unlike the lawyer whose clean shoes rest on an office desk, the recruit's feet are planted firmly on the floor. Thus, they will be soiled before long, with blood. Henley's substitution of the verb "spill" (for earlier and later uses of "fall") suggests that blood will be shed because blood is what is spilled; blood, unlike hair, does not "fall." The recruit is analogous to the biblical Samson, of Samson and Delia fame.[52] Since Samson's strength stemmed from his mane, a sign of his personal convenant with God, loss of his locks ushered in weakness. Likewise, the recruit places his trust in Reagan, or perhaps Reagan's world view. Similarly, when he shaves his head as a sign of his convenant, the result is the same--weakness and loss of individuality.

In a synecdochic move, the focus quickly switches to a troop of young servicemen, the symbol of military authority. Shot from a low angle, the figures are ominous and threatening. The innocence of youth is transformed into a military machine. In a parody of verse one, Henley croons "Offer up your best defense," substituting the loss of innocence owing to blind faith in government for the loss of

sexual innocence illustrated earlier. Although Henley is juxtaposing cultural (and patriarchal) rites of passage--a girl becomes a woman by losing her virginity, a boy becomes a man via military service--he situates each experience within an emotional framework. The sexual experience is a pleasurable memory, and to the extent that the song's sensual rhythm is dominant, the sexual scenario is similarly dominant. Enlisting in the military is not equally appealing; the experience serves to emasculate, and the lessons learned are to be remembered, but not re-experienced in the same way that Henley strains to recapture the sexual exhilaration of his youth. The pairing of these dichotomous experiences suggests the strategy of "perspective by incongruity," articulated by Kenneth Burke, whereby two unlike relationships or objects are deliberately synthesized in a unitary metaphor.[53] The linkage suggests some aspect of reality that heretofore has been hidden from view. In this case the coupling is ironic; the two experiences are far from similar, much less identical. His explanation of the events, that is, the unfolding context demonstrated on screen, calls the analogy into question and explains the paradox. They are linked insofar as they both argue for a return to nature--the encroachment of government and big business must be stopped; individuals must be respected. In

the past, Henley implies, nature was valued; nature is disrespected in the present, and we are preoccupied with profits and militarism.

Youth is emphasized again as Henley features a football team celebration during his third and final repetition of "Offer up your best defense." Although it may seem like a stretch to call these boys "authority figures," their presence can indeed be linked to the recruits they follow. After all, these boys will inherit our country's leadership. They are the leaders of tomorrow. Before they assume their leadership roles, they will be transformed into a military machine.

It is significant to note that all the political and military figures are disembodied throughout the video: They are never cast as complete human beings, but body parts. Because they are not fully human, our loyalties are misplaced if we choose to follow them. This, too, highlights the disparities between the two seemingly innocent rites of passage depicted in the video.

Conclusion

"The End of the Innocence" reflects Don Henley's personal philosophy and his endeavor to use rock music as a

vehicle for change. Henley's soft sell approach, together with constraints imposed on his work by profit-oriented producers and distributors, reduces his politics to a politics of indirection and strategic ambiguity. That ambiguity situates Henley's narrative comfortably within an aesthetic framework that defines music video, namely cohesiveness in the absence of coherence. That ambiguity advances an attack on a Republican administration, while paradoxically depicting a rather conservative deliverance from the current crisis. That ambiguity rests on not interpreting Henley's metaphors as ironic and incongruous, but accepting his paradoxes at face value. And, perhaps most importantly, that ambiguity is achieved by the alluring rhythm accented in the video. Insofar as Henley walks a tightrope between agitprop and pabulum, his work raises the question of whether politics can ever be bought or sold on the basis of emotional appeal. That question has perplexed scholars for centuries.

The timeliness of the release of the video reveal Henley's goal for rock music--to remind. [54] He reminds us of the excesses and recesses of the Reagan era, of what transpires in the credibility gap between political rhetoric and reality. Above all else, Henley's reminder serves to gently point the finger at those implicated in the crime:

It is the American people, after all, who heralded Reagan into office. It is the American people who support the nameless and faceless military figures, presented so ominously in the video.

Viewers in possession of the intertextual knowledge of Henley's political persona will be more likely to detect the political thread that runs throughout his work. In the absence of intertextual information Henley's political perspective will likely be blurred. "Most of the time," Eric Breitbart notes, "politics and music mix like oil and water. You can shake them up together, but they separate quickly."[55] Indeed, the ambiguity required to please both fan and producer makes the video interesting, but diffuses the political punch. Thus, it is not inappropriate to say that the function, not the form, constrains the message. Where potential profits are concerned, unfettered creativity is likely to be curbed.

Don Henley and B.R. Hornsby, "The End of the Innocence."
From the album The End of the Innocence, Geffen Records, 1989.

A
B
Remember when the days were long
And rolled beneath the deep blue sky
Didn't have a care in the world
With Mommy and Daddy standin' by
But "happily ever after" fails
And we've been poisoned by these fairy tales
The lawyers dwell on small details
Since daddy had to fly

C
But I know a place where we can go
Still untouched by men
We'll sit and watch the clouds roll by
And the tall grass wave in the wind
You can lay your head back on the ground
And let your hair fall all around me
Offer up your best defense
But this is the end
This is the end of the innocence

A
B
O' beautiful, for spacious skies
Now those skies are threatening
They're beating plowshares into swords
For this tired old man that we elected king
Armchair warriors often fail
And we've been poisoned by these fairy tales
The lawyers clean up all details
Since daddy had to lie

C
But I know a place where we can go
And wash away this sin
We'll sit and watch the clouds roll by
And the tall grass wave in the wind
Just lay your head back on the ground
Let your hair spill all around me
Offer up your best defense
But this is the end
This is the end of the innocence

A/D
B
Who knows how long this will last
Now we've come so far, so fast
But, somewhere back there in the dust
That same small town in each of us
I need to remember this
So baby give me just one kiss
And let me take a long last look
Before we say goodbye

C
Just lay your head back on the ground
And let your hair fall all around me
Offer up your best defense
But this is the end
This is the end of the innocence

A

[1] Quoted in Mikal Gilmore, 'Don Henley," Rolling Stone (5 November-10 December 1987): 287-291.

[2] David King Dunaway, "Music as Political Communication in the United States," Popular Music and Communication, ed. James Lull (Newbury Park, California: Sage, 1987) 36-52.

[3] Robin Denselow, When the Music's Over (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1989.

[4] Jean Rosenbluth, "Political Use of Pop Tunes Has Copyright Pros Scratching Heads," Variety 9 November 1988: 53-54.

[5] Jean Rosenbluth, "Candidates Vying for Music Dollars," Billboard 9 April 1988: 1, 96.

[6] ASCAP, a performance rights organizaton, stands for the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers.

[7] Bill Holland, "Election Panel Fines ASCAP for Campaign Violations," Billboard 8 October 1988: 82.

[8] See Ronald Brownstein, The Power and the Glitter (New York: Pantheon, 1990) for a historical look at the relationship between Hollywood and Washington. Hollywood's influence is by no means fleeting. In 1986, for example, the Hollywood Women's Political Committee (HWPC) raised $1.5 million, under the direction of singer Barbra Streisand, to fund congressional campaigns (p. 311).

[9] See, for example, Steven Levy, "Ad Nauseum: How MTV Sells Out Rock and Roll," Rolling Stone, December 8, 1983, pp. 30-37, 74-79.

[10] Anne Johnston Wadsworth and Lynda Lee Kaid, "Political Themes and Images in Music Video," Politics in Familiar Contexts: Projecting Politics Through Popular Media, ed. Robert L. Savage and Dan Nimmo (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex, 1990) 159-70.

[11] Paul Attallah, "Music Television," Watching All the Music: Rock Video and Beyond, ed. Gareth Sanson (Montreal: McGill University's Working Papers in Communication, 1987) 19-40.

[12] Attallah 25.

[13] Attallah 32.

[14] Se-Wan Sunand James Lull, "The Adolescent Audience for Music Video and Why They Watch," Journal of Communication (Winter 1986): 115-125.

[15] Sun and Lull 121.

[16] Steve Jones, "Cohesive But Not Coherent: Music Videos, Narrative and Culture," Popular Music and Society 12 (1988): 15-29.

[17] Jones 16.

[18] I do not wish to involve myself in the debate over what postmodernism means (cultural condition versus aesthetic technique). I do borrow insights from scholars who interrogate music video from the standpoint of a postmodern text (in both senses of postmodern). However, I am troubled by scholars who insist as does Grossberg, that it is patently unproductive to take popular culture artifacts seriously; "I am always surprised that critics take MTV, and particularly videos, so seriously. MTV is neither a contemplative text which is constantly demanding interpretation and attention, nor is it some wonderfully orgasmic pleasure" (265). See Lawrence Grossberg, "MTV: Swinging on a (Postmodern) Star," Cultural Politics in Contemporary America, ed. Ian Angus and Shut Jhally (New York and London: Routledge, 1989) 254-270.

[19] Grossberg 266.

[20] Robert Hodge, "Videoclips as Revolutionary Form," Australian Journal of Cultural Studies 2 (1984): 155-121.

[21] There are music videos that attempt to make political statements, such as Jackson Browne's World in Motion and Freedom by Neil Young. Such videos, according to Holden, demand depth of commitment on the part of the audience, and therefore are less likely to garner audience approval. Stephen Holden, "Do Songs About the Worlds Ills Do Any Good?" New York Times 7 January 1990, sect. 2: 28. For further examples, see Eric Breitbart, "Agit Rock Video: Music TV Goes Political," Sightlines 19 (Spring/Summer 1986): 24-26.

[22] See Peter Canellos, "Mr. Serious: Don Henley is Passionate About his Cause--and his Critics," Boston Globe, 14 December 1990: 52, 63. See also Chris Willman, "'The End of the Innocence': Henley Sums it Up Again," Los Angeles Times. 25 June 1989, Sect. C: 58.

[23] Quoted in Gilmore 289.

[24] Quoted in Gilmore 291.

[25] Quoted in Christopher Connelly, "Don Henley: The Former Eagle Has Landed," Rolling Stone, 25 April 1985, pp. 11-12.

[26] Quoted in Anthony DeCurtis, "The Eagles," Rolling Stone, 20 September 1990, pp. 89-90, 92-94.

[27] Quoted in Gilmore 289.

[28] Quoted in Gilmore 287.

[29] Quoted in Gilmore 291.

[30] Quoted in Gilmore 288.

[31] Quoted in Eve Zibart, "Don Henley: Heart and Solo," Washington Post, 18 August 1989, Sect. WW: 23.

[32] Interviews with Henley are widely available in the rock press, and his political activism has been covered by the major national newspapers. Additionally, MTV and VH1, the two major video networks, regularly feature entertainment-oriented news programs, to keep viewers apprised of what their idols are up to.

[33] Hodge 116.

[34] I refer to Henley as the narrator because he is the omnipresent Greek chorus of the video. Even though the recollections are not strictly autobiographical, I argue that the video reflects Henley's world view. Nevertheless, any project of the magnitude is necessarily collaborative. Musician Bruce Hornsby wrote the music for the song. The video itself was directed by David Fincher, who received a nomination for Best Direction (1990 MTV Video Music Awards) for his efforts. See, Jim Farber, "Clip Corporation: Propaganda Films Rules the Music Video World, Rolling Stone 23 August 1990, p. 137. Typically, when it comes to

creative input, the bigger the star, the more control s/he will have over the video. (See, for example, Michael Shore, The Rolling Stone Book of Rock Video (New York, Quill, 1984) pp. 147-181 for a discussion of the making of videos for Cindy Lauper and Stevie Nicks). Thus, it is fair to assume Henley's input was influential. The fact that Henley discussed the pending video project in interviews is also indicative of his influence. See DeCurtis, 1989.

[35] See the appendix for a list of the lyrics. The letters on the left correspond to the musical cycle of the song.

[36] James D. Graham, "Rhythms in Rock," Popular Music and Society 1 (Fall 1971): 33-43.

[37] Gary Burns, "A Typology of 'Hooks' in Popular Records," Popular Music 6 (1987): 3.

[38] Graham 35.

[39] Carl E. Seashore, Psychology of Music (New York: Dover, 1967): 147.

[40] Seashore 143.

[41] Seashore 142.

[42] Graham 37.

[43] See, for example, the first four lines (two couplets) of the song.

[44] Timothy White, Rock Lives (New York: Henry Holt, 1990) 429-438.

[45] Quoted in White 437-438.

[46] Discussed in Hodge 117.

[47] Gilmore 291.

[48] One need only recall then-Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel's often ridiculed "Ray-Ban Plan." Rather than require stop gap measures for the depletion of the ozone layer, Hodel recommended a public awareness campaign to encourage citizens to wear sunglasses and protective sun screen when they go outdoors. For a summary of Hodel's

recommendations, see "Worse Than Watt," The New Republic, 6 July 1987, pp. 7-9.

[49] Quoted in DeCurtis, 1990, 94.

[50] Quoted in Gilmore 291.

[51] Quoted in Zibart 23.

[52] I borrow this analogy from Mark Marose. "Sex and Politics: A Study of Don Henley's video 'The End of the Innocence.'" Unpublished Master's paper, Northern Illinois University, 1991.

[53] Kenneth Burke, Permanence and Change (Berkeley: U of California P, 1984) 89-124.

[54] The video was released during the summer of 1989 as noted above. It is pointless to pinpoint the Reagan legacy, unless of course one is trying to remind voters of the mess they created. There are no explicit references that link Henley's recollections to the Bush Administration.

[55] Breitbart 24.